



SUMMARY

Bottom line.

If we want to be an effective member of God's team, we must learn to get up when we fall and press on.

Objectives.

For students to:

- Discover the life of Paul and his teachings on perseverance
- Discover the meaning of perseverance
- Identify areas in life where they have fallen down and stayed there

Key Passage.

Philippians 3:4-17

Memory Verse.

Philippians 3:14

Summary.

A football team that wants to move the ball needs to have a good running game. But the average running back only makes about four yards a carry. They get the ball, they get knocked down, and they get back up. God wants us to have the same perseverance as Paul, who was constantly knocked down. We need to keep our eyes on the prize, get back up, and press on until the game is done.



SKIT

The Football Experience
By John Cosper

Cast breakdown: 3M, 1F

Run time: 5 minutes

Themes: Perseverance, getting up when we are down

CAST

Erin- A sports reporter
Buck- A lucky fan
Two linebackers

Erin enters stage left, walks to center.

ERIN: Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, we have a winner in the Live Like a Football Player Contest! The lucky winner will receive a dream week in which they will learn what it's like to be a star running back. And our winner is... Buck Weaver!

Buck runs on stage from the audience, jumping and shouting.

BUCK: Wooo! Yeah! Wooo! I won! I won! Take that, kids! I won, not you!

ERIN: Buck, how does it feel to be the winner?

BUCK: Feels great, Erin!

ERIN: Buck, for the next week, you are going to live like a professional running back.

BUCK: Does that mean I get to ride around in fancy cars, go to parties, date pretty girls, and--

ERIN: No, no, no, nothing like that.

BUCK: Then what do I get to do?

ERIN: Why don't you step over there and find out?

Erin points to stage right. Buck walks over there.



SKIT

BUCK: Like this?

The linebackers run on from stage right and flatten Buck. They stand over him, taunting for a second, then run off stage right.

ERIN: For the next seven days, you'll experience the grinding, the hitting, the personal struggle that is being a professional running back.

Buck staggers to his feet.

BUCK: Did you see that? They hit me!

ERIN: It's all part of the experience. Come over here, I'll tell you more.

Buck walks to center. Erin steps back as the linebackers enter from stage right, drive Buck to the stage, then run off stage right.

BUCK: Owww!

ERIN: Buck, do you know the typical running back in the NFL only averages about four yards a carry?

BUCK: Ugh.

ERIN: Its true. That's why every time you travel four yards, you'll come face to face with a pair of mean, nasty linebackers.

BUCK: Don't I even get a helmet?

ERIN: Oh, silly me. (holds out helmet) This is for you.

BUCK: Thanks.

Buck walks to Erin. She hands him the helmet - just as he gets hit by the linebackers again. They exit stage right.

ERIN: After a week of this, you'll know what it's like to really be a football star like Maurice Jones Drew, Matt Forte, Ray Rice, and--

BUCK: Doctor!



SKIT

ERIN: I'm sorry?

BUCK: I need a doctor.

ERIN: Of course. We expected you would. He's right off stage.

Buck staggers off stage left. The linebackers race on from stage right and dive off stage left. We hear Buck screaming as he's hit again. Erin winks at the audience and follows the linebackers.



ICE BREAKER

Which do you think would be more fun: playing offense or defense?



OBJECT LESSON

Item needed:

A package of weed eater cord

Does anyone know what this is?

This is that little cord that fits inside a weed eater. This little plastic cord is what spins around and slices all those tall weeds down to size - and your leg, if you're not careful.

When you only have a little bit of weeding to do, it goes quick with a weed eater. A few swipes with this little cord going at high speed, and you're done. But if the weeds get tall and thick, you're going to be a while. Not only does it take time to cut the weeds, it takes time to replace the cord.

That's right! These little cords, they don't last very long, especially in thick weeds. Sometimes they may last a while, some times only a few minutes. Like a running back smashing into a thick defensive line, they get cut down to size, over and over. Over and over, you have to stop, disconnect the power, take off the cap on the bottom of the weed eater, remove the remnant of the old cable, thread the new one into the bottom, replace the cap, and start back at it.

It's not easy when you get knocked down to size to get back up, but the work of the church is never done, and God needs people willing to rise up when they are knocked down.

When times get tough, remember the story of Paul. Remember the endurance of Walter Payton. Or, just watch your Dad next time he has to weed a big patch of grass. It takes time. It takes patience. It takes a commitment to keep moving forward and never quit.

It's not easy getting back up over and over and over. But when the job is done and the prize is in hand, it's a sweet feeling.



LESSON

We started this series with the most popular sport in the world. Today we're going to finish with the most popular sport in America - football. Football is far and away the most popular sport in both money made and number of viewers. It's so popular that the LOWEST rated regular season football game each year draws a larger number of viewers than the World Series AND the NBA Finals.

Just like basketball fans, football fans love the big playmakers. When you think of the big names in the sport, most people think first about the quarterbacks: Aaron Rodgers, Tom Brady, Cam Newton, Peyton Manning, Andrew Luck. If I were to ask you to name some past stars, you'd probably go right to the quarterbacks as well: Brett Favre, Dan Marino, Joe Montana, John Elway.

Quarterbacks run the show. They make the calls in the huddle and at the line. When they make the big pass to the receiver, the crowd goes wild. We love the long pass, the bomb, and the Hail Mary play. It's what makes football exciting.

But those long passes and big bombs are hard to come by without something else - a running game. The saying in the NFL goes if you want to have a good passing game, you have to start with the running game. If all you ever do is throw the ball, the defense won't bother trying to stop you at the line. They'll drop seven men into the backfield, and good luck making that big pass. But if the defense knows you can run the ball, they have to spread their weapons out more, giving the quarterback a better chance to complete a pass.

Passing yards come in 10's and 20's and 30's. But running yards come one, two, three at a time. A great back will occasionally spring free for a big gain and even a long touchdown run, but the average run from scrimmage is less than four yards.

The legendary Chicago Bear Walter Payton ran for 16,726 yards in his career. That's the length of more than 167 football fields. But listen to this - Walter Payton ran the ball 3.8 times. That means he was knocked down, on average, every 4.4 yards.



LESSON

We've spent the past three weeks talking about getting in the game with God. We talked about being a fan and not a player. We talked about knowing and fulfilling our role on the team. We've also talked about guarding our hearts. Today, we're going to talk about perseverance - getting up when we've been knocked down, and never giving up.

In the game of football, players are constantly getting hit, knocked down, and dropped to the ground. Every time they get knocked down, they get up. They have to get up if they want to win. Perhaps no one in the Bible embodies this trait more than the apostle Paul.

The second half of the book of Acts is focused primarily on the man who carried the gospel from Jerusalem to Rome. But Paul didn't get there any more directly than Walter Payton got to 16,726 yards. Paul was constantly knocked down. But he never failed to give up.

Paul's missionary career begins in earnest in Acts 13, when they take the gospel to the Jews. The Jews rejected Paul's message, so Paul shook the dust from his feet and moved on, taking the gospel to the Gentiles.

In chapter 14, Paul heals a man who was crippled. The people begin to believe and receive the gospel, but the Jewish leaders find him and stone him.

Paul gets back up and moves on, but he soon loses his travel buddy, Barnabas. In Acts 16 he begins traveling with a man named Silas. They cast a demon out of a young woman, and as thanks for this miracle, Paul and Silas are tossed in jail.

Are you seeing a pattern here? Where ever Paul went, there was resistance to the gospel. The people stoned him. They threw him in jail. They chased him out of town. But Paul never gave up the game. He knew Jesus wanted him to take the gospel all the way to Rome. Not even a ship wreck - Yes, Paul was in a ship wreck! – couldn't stop him. Paul was led in chains from prison cell to prison cell, and eventually, he did speak the gospel in Caesar's court at Rome.



LESSON

Paul sums up his philosophy like this in his letter to the Philippians.

Read Philippians 3:7-14

Paul found the will to persevere in his commitment to Christ. Paul tells us in this passage that he never let past defeats occupy his mind. Everything, short of growing closer to Christ and leading others to Christ, became meaningless to him. When Paul was put in prison or persecuted, he never let those defeats take away his desire to win. He let go of the past. He kept his eyes on Jesus. He kept moving forward.

Serving the Lord is not going to lead to an easy life. Standing up for your faith may cost you friends. It may get you made fun of - or worse. Even today, as we share this message this morning, there are people in prison in other countries because they love Jesus.

I pray that never happens for any of us. But if it does, I encourage you to remember the story of Paul. Pick yourself up. Stand strong, and always keep moving forward. Get in the game, stay in the game, and don't stop playing before God's time.



DISCUSSION

Break the ice.

1. Have you ever given up on something - a sport, a hobby, or some activity that was just too discouraging?
2. Why did you give up on that particular activity?
3. What would have had to have happened, or gone better, for you to have stuck with that habit?

SAY: It takes wisdom to know when to quit and when to get back up. When it comes to living out our faith, however, getting back up isn't an option. It's our mission. Like an NFL running back, our job is to get up, brush ourselves off, line up, and get ready for another play.

Study the story.

4. Who was Paul?
5. What was the goal set before him?
6. What were some of the obstacles that knocked Paul down in his pursuit of the prize?
7. Why didn't Paul quit when he was beaten or thrown in jail?
8. In his letter to the Philippians, what strategy does Paul give us for moving forward and not staying down?

SAY: Paul isn't the only person to suffer for Christ. There are stories in the New Testament about other apostles facing persecution. Paul wasn't the only one. Historical records tell us about even more believers who faced the same challenges. To this very day, there are people persecuted for their faith emotionally, verbally, and



DISCUSSION

physically. The world wants to knock them down and make them stay down, but God can give us the strength to get back up and keep going.

Live it out.

9. Have any of you ever been knocked down for your faith?
10. How does it make you feel if someone puts you down for your faith?
11. We've spent the last few weeks talking about playing on God's team. We know that each of us have different gifts to use in service to God. What would happen if we decided to quit? What would happen to the gifts and the specific work he gave for us?
12. What "prize" do we have before us, as Christians that we can strive for?
13. What can we do to stay focused? What are some of the things God promises us when our eyes remain fixed on Him?

Dear God,

Thank you for choosing us to serve on your team. Give us the strength we need to get up when we are knocked down. Keep our eyes focused on the prize so that we will not quit until the game is done.

*In Jesus's name,
Amen*



MEMORY VERSE

Philippians 3:14

I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.



GAME

Kiwi Football

Prep.

Items needed:
A few kiwi fruits
Masking tape

The Game.

Choose four contestants from the audience and pair them up. Have a long, clear stretch that the contestants can run through safely marked off for the game. Mark a line with the tape about twenty feet down that strip.

Each pair of contestants will get five chances to throw a touchdown pass with the kiwi fruit. One team member will be the quarterback, and the other the receiver.

Play.

Each turn starts with the receiver running from the starting point (where the QB stands) and racing down the open path. The QB must throw the ball to the receiver past the taped mark on the floor. Any passes short of that mark or that are dropped do not count. After each turn, the receiver returns to the starting mark while the other team takes their turn.

Teams get seven points for every completed pass past the twenty-foot marker. The team with the most points after five turns wins.

Take it to the next level.

Add a third member to each team. This person will cover the opposing team's receiver and try to break up or intercept a pass. Three points are awarded to an interception, but none on a break up. Other oblong-shaped fruits or vegetables may be substituted for the kiwi, such as avocados.